Year 10 Photography Curriculum Summary

Through the Lens: Exploring Photography

What students will learn:

Photography as a Visual Language

- That photography is more than just taking pictures—it's a way to communicate ideas and emotions.
- How to use light, composition (how things are arranged in the photo), and subject matter to tell a story.
- How to plan ideas using mood boards and mind maps.
- How to talk about their work using key photography terms.

Composition: How to Arrange a Photo

- Key techniques like the rule of thirds, leading lines, angles, balance, shape, texture, and colour.
- How these techniques guide the viewer's eye and create impact.
- How to analyse and explain why certain photos are effective.
- How to design clear and visually appealing research pages.

The Exposure Triangle: Controlling Light in Photographs

- How aperture, shutter speed, and ISO work together to control how light is captured.

Although Photography is introduced in Year 10, students bring a wealth of transferable knowledge and skills from KS3 Art. These include:

Visual Language and Composition:

KS3 Art projects (Fragmented Faces, Viewpoints, Hockney Landscapes) develop understanding of:

- Rule of thirds, balance, focal points, and perspective.
- Use of visual elements (line, tone, texture, colour) to communicate meaning.
- These underpin photographic composition and visual storytelling.

Media Experimentation and Mixed Media:

Projects like Jennifer Judd McGee – Layering with Mixed Media and Organic Structures introduce:

- Layering, abstraction, and collage.
- Use of photography within mixed media contexts.
- These experiences support digital manipulation and conceptual distortion in Year 10 Photography.

• How to use these settings to create different effects in their photos. • How to plan and take photos with these settings in mind. • How to use diagrams and examples to show their understanding. **Digital Skills and Organisation** • How to use OneDrive and other digital tools to store, edit, and present their work. • How to keep their work organised and easy to access. • How to lay out their pages clearly with well-chosen images and thoughtful annotations. **Evaluating and Presenting Final Work** • How to review their photos and choose the best ones. • How to explain their choices using photography terms. • How to present their final images in a professional and thoughtful way.	**Contextual and Critical Understanding:** Artist research and analysis (Luke Dixon, Hockney, Cubism) develop: • Skills in interpreting visual work using the formal elements. • Understanding of how artists communicate identity, place, and narrative. • These directly support AO1 and AO3 in Photography.

Year 10 Photography Curriculum Summary

Distortion: Altered Realities	
What students will learn: **Understanding Distortion in Photography**	**Prior Learning** • KS3 Art: Composition, abstraction, symbolism, and visual storytelling.

• That photography involves more than taking pictures, it includes research, experimentation, editing, and presentation. • How distortion can change how we see identity, space, and reality. • That distortion is a creative tool used to express emotion or challenge perception. **Artist Influence and Idea Development** • How to explore themes like identity and abstraction using mood boards and mind maps. • How artists like Abigail Reynolds and Doug Aitken use distortion in their work. • How to analyse images using Content, Composition, Context, Connection, and Comment. **Technical Control: Exposure Triangle** • How aperture, shutter speed, and ISO affect image style and clarity. • How to use these settings to create effects like motion blur and light trails. • How technical choices influence mood and meaning. **Composition and Visual Impact** • How to use composition techniques (rule of thirds, framing, contrast) to enhance distortion. • How visual structure affects how images are interpreted. • How to design clear and visually engaging planning pages. **Creative Techniques and Editing**	• Familiarity with artist research, annotation, and iterative development. • Basic understanding of visual language and personal response. **Future Learning** • Year 11 Personal Project: Builds on technical control and conceptual development. • Prepares students for independent enquiry, artist-led research, and portfolio curation. • Lays the foundation for A-Level Photography or Art & Design.

• How to experiment with long exposure, light painting, macro photography, and photomontage. • How to use DSLR cameras and Photoshop to manipulate images. • How to reflect on and annotate their creative process. **Recording and Presenting Work** • How to document their progress using contact sheets, editing pages, and reflections. • How to select and justify final images that best represent the theme of distortion. • How to present their work professionally using OneDrive and layout principles.	

Year 11 Photography Curriculum Summary

Personal Project: Exploring visual language through Architecture, Landscape, Still Life, or Portraiture.

What students will learn:	Prior Learning
Photography as Personal Expression • How to use composition, light, texture, and framing to tell visual stories. • How abstraction, symbolism, and perspective can add meaning to images. • That every photo reflects the photographer's choices and ideas. **Research and Artist Influence** • How to study the work of photographers and connect it to their own ideas. • How to analyse images using Content, Composition, Context, Connection, and Comment. • How to recreate and respond to artist techniques to deepen understanding. **Developing a Personal Project** • How to choose a theme (e.g. Architecture, Landscape, Still Life, Portraiture) and explore it through mind maps and mood boards. • How to write a mission statement to guide their creative direction. • How to plan photoshoots and visual strategies based on their theme. **Experimentation and Technical Skills** • How to use DSLR cameras with manual settings (aperture, shutter speed, ISO).	• Year 10 Photography: Technical fluency with DSLR cameras and editing software. • Understanding of distortion, abstraction, and conceptual intent. • Experience with artist research, annotation, and portfolio presentation. **Future Learning** • A-Level Photography: Independent investigation, written elements, and advanced conceptual development. • Creative industries or further education: Portfolio development, visual communication, and critical thinking.

• How to experiment with techniques like long exposure, forced perspective, and physical manipulation. • How to edit creatively using Photoshop (overlays, colour changes, multiple exposures). **5. Recording and Refining Ideas** • How to document their process using contact sheets, editing pages, and annotations. • How to reflect on their technical and creative decisions. • How to refine their work through re-shoots and feedback. **6. Planning and Presenting Final Work** • How to develop and test multiple ideas for a final outcome. • How to select and refine the strongest idea. • How to present a final image (or series) that is both technically strong and personally meaningful. • How to curate a digital portfolio that shows their full creative journey.	
Component 2 - External Exam Preparatory Period and Invigilated Time	
Structure: Preparatory Period (from 2 Jan). Students choose one starting point from seven provided. Develop preparatory work in any format (e.g. digital portfolio, physical manipulations). Work must address all four assessment objectives, include drawing and annotation, and acknowledge sources. No additional preparatory work allowed once supervised time begins.	

Supervised Time: 10 hours
Two full day sessions, the first 2 hours must be consecutive.
Students realise their intentions utilising preparatory work (no amendments to preparatory work allowed once supervised time begins).
Work must be clearly identified and securely stored.
No internet access permitted (except approved software).

Assessment:
All work (preparatory + supervised) assessed as a whole, out of 96.
Outcomes may be single or multiple, in any format or scale.

Compliance:
Supervised sessions will follow JCQ regulations.

Year 12 Photography Curriculum Summary

A-Level Foundation

In Year 12, students begin their A-Level Photography journey with a foundation year designed to build confidence, creativity, and technical skills. The course is flexible and tailored to suit each student's experience, whether they're new to photography or already have experience at GCSE.
The curriculum is built around four key areas set by AQA:

- Developing ideas
- Experimenting with techniques
- Recording observations
- Creating personal and meaningful outcomes

Students start with a series of skills-based projects, depending on need, learning how to use advanced camera techniques, compose images, work with lighting, and edit photographs. As the year progresses, they move on to themed projects (such as identity, place, or storytelling) that encourage personal expression and creativity.

Throughout the year, students explore a wide range of photographic styles and techniques, including studio work, documentary photography, and experimental approaches. Where needed, students receive individual support through tailored tasks or briefs to help them grow in specific areas.
Regular feedback sessions, one-to-one tutorials, and studies of other photographers help students develop their critical thinking and visual understanding. They are encouraged to explore the work of artists from different cultures and time periods, making connections to their own creative work.
By the end of Year 12, students will have created a strong portfolio that shows both technical skill and personal vision. This body of work prepares them for the Personal Investigation in Year 13 and supports a smooth transition into the second year of the course.

Year 12 into 13 Photography Curriculum Summary

Year 12/13 A-Level Photography: Personal Investigation

In Year 13, students focus on the Personal Investigation - a major project that runs from the end of Year 12 through to February of Year 13. This is a self-directed and in-depth exploration of a theme or idea that is personally meaningful to each student.
Students have full creative freedom to choose their subject and approach. They can work in digital, film, experimental, or mixed media formats, and are encouraged to explore photography as both a technical skill and an expressive art form.
The Personal Investigation includes two parts:

- A practical portfolio of photographic work
- A written study (1,000–3,000 words) that reflects on their creative process, influences, and ideas

The written element is not just a formal essay, but a thoughtful reflection that supports the student's practical work and helps develop their critical thinking.
Throughout the project, students receive regular support through one-to-one tutorials, peer feedback, and workshops tailored to their needs, whether that's studio lighting, darkroom techniques, digital editing, or creative presentation methods.
The project is required to meet all four AQA assessment objectives:

- AO1 - Developing ideas
- AO2 - Experimenting with techniques
- AO3 - Recording observations
- AO4 - Creating a personal and meaningful outcome

By the end of the Personal Investigation, students will have produced a cohesive and creative portfolio that shows technical skill, thoughtful research, and a strong personal voice. This work is excellent preparation for further study in photography or the creative industries.

Year 13 Photography Curriculum Summary

Year 13 A-Level Photography: Externally Set Assignment (ESA)

The final component of Year 13 is the Externally Set Assignment (ESA), released by AQA on the 1st of February. Students choose one starting point from a selection provided by the exam board and develop preparatory work over several weeks. This culminates in a 15-hour supervised period, during which students produce a final photographic outcome under exam conditions.

The ESA is assessed using the same four assessment objectives as the Personal Investigation and provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to respond independently and creatively to a new brief. It often results in highly personal and ambitious photographic outcomes that combine the skills, knowledge, and conceptual understanding developed throughout the course.